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Monday, September, 24, 2007

Conestoga College, Kitchener, Ont.

www.conestogac.on.ca/spoke

39th Year — No. 17

## Lawsuit against Ontario colleges moving forward

By **CHRISTOPHER MILLS**

The battle between Ontario colleges and their students over the charging of potentially illegal ancillary fees is finally moving forward.

The lawsuit is scheduled to be brought before Judge Joan Lax of the Canadian Superior Court on Oct. 5. In order to continue, it must be certified as a class action suit. Prosecuting lawyer Doug Elliott said once the case is certified, it can take up to a year to go to trial. He hopes to have it completed sooner.

"We've already filed our materials on the colleges, so it's just a question of when we can get the responding materials back from the colleges," he said. "We're aiming for the spring. We're hoping we can get a decision before another school year rolls around."

The suit was initially filed by Ontario college students Amanda (Andy) Hassum and Dan Roffey on June 6. The two students claim the colleges were charging students illegal ancillary fees to circumvent a tuition freeze in the province. Under the policy of the provincial government, collecting additional money to fund projects or core academic operations covered by tuition is banned.

Immediately after the lawsuit was filed, Training, College and Universities Minister Chris Bentley ordered all 24 Ontario colleges to stop charging such fees. Calls to Bentley's office were answered by his assistant, who said Bentley would not comment because he was too focused on his election campaign.

Hassum, currently taking a year off from the advertising program at Conestoga College, said she noticed in her second year that she was paying more than she had in first year.

"I kind of felt strongly about it," she said. "I'm not a very political person, but for some reason I realized 'hey, I'm not the only one paying these (extra fees).'"

She said she was really frustrated to see it occurring at all the colleges across Ontario.

"I'm prepared to do whatever I have to, to put a stop to it," she said. "It's like if they're going to mess with single mothers who are working like five jobs; these are the people you feel bad for, and that's why I have had such support."

The lawsuit is seeking \$200 million in restitution from the col-

leges. Elliott said that figure came from careful estimates as to how much colleges have taken from students in allegedly illegal fees during the period of the tuition freeze.

"It's purely an estimate based on information that we have available, based on the types of fees charged to college students across Ontario, the number of college students and amount of time covered by the lawsuit," he said.

If certified, the lawsuit will move forward on behalf of all Ontario college students — roughly 150,000 full-timers as well as part-timers. A victory would mean each student would be reimbursed for any illegal fees they paid.

When asked if the lawsuit was purely about financial restitution, both Elliott and Hassum had similar responses.

"Personally, I'm not going to get much of the gain," Hassum said. "If we do win, I'm not getting the \$200 million. This is more that I want to stop it. That's all it really came down to is that this has to stop."

Elliott said the government made rules and those rules exist for a purpose.

"The rules are there to protect students from being charged more than is permitted by the government for tuition," he said. "They're trying to get around that by charging for things that are supposed to be covered by tuition by backdoor fees."

Elliott said a memo was sent out in 2004 by the Ministry of Education regarding the legality of such fees, and it went directly to the college presidents.

"Any suggestion that they were in the dark is really something that can't be believed."

Elliott added that Conestoga President John Tibbits has been adamant that he will not stop charging such fees, and any student who doesn't pay them will not be registered with the college.

"He leaves students with very little choice but to proceed with the class action," he said. "He's not going to stop charging (fees) and the government is not going to force him to stop charging them."

Tibbits declined to comment on the issue, saying it was a legal matter that he couldn't discuss.

So what kind of message would a victory in this case send? A very strong one, according to Elliott.

Continued on Page 2



(Photo by Jennifer Marko)

Kristin Renshaw, clockwise from top left, Laura Carson, Desiree Walker, Nicole Haisman, Kristie Johnston and Janine Furtado enjoy an afternoon of food, friends and fun at the eighth annual ECE barbecue on Sept. 12.

## ECE students bonding together

By **JENNIFER MARKO**

A little wind and rain did not stop the eighth annual early childhood education barbecue, Sept. 12. Through the rain the students continued to eat and talk and just have fun.

"We're thrilled it stopped raining," said Goranka Vukelich, the main co-ordinator of the event as well as the chair of child development and education studies.

The students were served hamburgers and hotdogs in the ECE playground.

"This was to welcome the students and to celebrate the recipients of the awards," said Vukelich.

The awards that were presented

were donated by members of the community, the Preston Rotary Club and the YWCA, to acknowledge the second-year students' achievements in their field.

The YWCA got involved because they have a large childcare centre in the community.

"It's good because you get to talk to the second years," said Kristie Johnston, a first-year ECE student.

"It was a fun way to get out of class," said Janine Furtado, a first-year ECE student.

Hosting the barbecue took more than hamburgers and good friends to make it a success. Vukelich said it took enthusiasm and a desire for education. There were

also some games.

"It's to help make the students feel like part of the Conestoga community," she said.

Among those invited were ECE students, faculty, staff and some of the college community. Members of the program advisory committee were also invited.

"I think it's fabulous," Vukelich said. "It's a good introduction and helps make them feel comfortable."

At the halfway point the students were still making their way through the playground gates to join in the festivities.

"We'd like to give the children a big thanks for letting us use their playground," said Vukelich.

## No major problems with OSAP loans

By **FRANCA MAIO**

September is a stressful time for college students, with textbooks to buy, parking spots to vie for and bills to pay. However, the biggest headaches are caused by late OSAP loans.

This year no Tylenol was needed as the loans arrived on time.

Paul Matresky, manager of financial aid and the student awards office, said everything has gone smoothly.

He said they worked hard to meet their deadline, and have some students still handing in their paperwork.

"It has been very steady the past two and a half weeks," Matresky said.

Jolene Brenner, a third-year nursing student, said she did not experience any problems with OSAP this year.

The financial aid office started to hand out loans Aug 27.

Matresky said the approximate number of students at Conestoga College is 6,800 full-time students

and out of those, about 35-40 per cent receive OSAP.

The federal and provincial government have increased their funding so more students can receive OSAP, Matresky said.

**"The federal government increased it quite substantially so we are seeing more and more students getting at least some of the federal money."**

*Paul Matresky,  
financial aid manager*

"The federal government increased it quite substantially, so we are seeing more students getting at least some of the federal money," he said. "The province, unfortunately, didn't follow suit."

Megan Scheeringa, a second-year general arts student, said even with the increased funding,

she still cannot get OSAP because her parents make more than the allowed limit.

"I think it's very unfair," Scheeringa said.

She said she pays for school with a student loan and has a part-time job which pays for the monthly interest on the loan. She does not get financial help from her parents.

Matresky said the government has increased the amount a parent can make before they are disqualified from receiving OSAP.

He said possibly five or six years ago the limit would have been \$60,000, but now they increased the limit to close to \$100,000.

"The big word is access," he said adding. "The government is trying to help more Canadians attend post-secondary school."

"The province of Ontario has introduced some grants, and the federal government as well has some grants," he said. "It's all determined to give an equal opportunity to everyone who may not otherwise go to school."

## Now deep thoughts ...with Conestoga College

Random questions answered by random students

If you could be any fruit, which fruit would you be and why?

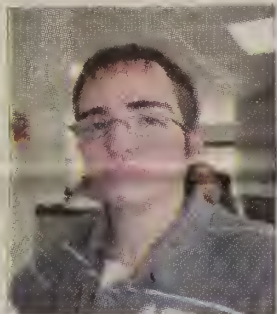


"Probably strawberries ... it'll be really cool to see what it's like to be turned into jam"

*Michelle Rogalski,  
first-year  
broadcast journalism*

"A banana, because everyone likes bananas."

*Chancellor Boyes,  
third-year  
marketing*



"A lime. They're little, they're green and they pack a punch."

*Evan Nightingale,  
first-year  
general arts and sciences*

"Strawberries! They can be really juicy or sweet or tart."

*Tabitha Fretz,  
general arts and sciences,  
health option*



"Apples because there's variety there. They're cute and round and different, just like people."

*Violet Dinev,  
first-year  
journalism broadcast*

"A pineapple ... they're always sweet and they're a bright and happy colour, just like my personality."

*Ricardo Ruiz,  
first-year  
electrical engineering  
technology*



Smile Conestoga, you could be our next respondent!

## Students seek restitution for fees

Continued from Page 1

"It would send a message that colleges should not be allowed to cheat their students, and the government should not be allowed to sit idly by while colleges cheat students," he said. "Secondly, the message is that students are prepared to stand up for themselves. When people in charge don't do the right thing and when they don't respect students' rights, students are prepared to fight to protect their own rights."

Hassum said the government was able to get away with charging these

fees for so long because students don't usually take the time to break down their college bill and examine each fee. They just pay the final amount they're given.

"All students know how expensive post-secondary is. You never go through and start saying 'what is this?' and 'how does it benefit me?'" she said. "These fees that are aiding our education are illegal because they are supposed to be in with our tuition."

Elliott wants to challenge students to hold political candidates to the

fire in the upcoming election.

"I want to encourage students in the upcoming election to ask candidates who are standing for office in the Cambridge area what they're going to do about the problem of illegal ancillary fees," he said. "If you get a chance to ask, whether it's the premier or Mr. Bentley or one of the other candidates, you should ask them if they plan to do anything about these illegal ancillary fees being charged by colleges. And if their answer is no, then you shouldn't vote for them."

## Television lab nearing completion

By CHRISTOPHER MILLS

The new radio and television wing at Conestoga College is finally getting up and running.

Three weeks into the school year, last-minute renovations are still being taken care of, but the wing is at least classroom ready.

Steve Parr, co-ordinator for broadcast-television, said it hasn't had much effect on the program, as 70 to 80 per cent of the work is pre-production.

"Planning, script writing, organizing as groups; nothing has changed," he said. "We're on the same track in terms of delivery of the curriculum as last year."

Mark Derro, chair of liberal studies, said a two-week delay in getting into the new facility was initially anticipated.

"Students are working on theoretical aspects for the interim period until the labs are commissioned," he said.

With regards to any further delays, Derro said the college recognizes that there might be some short-term pains to obtain long-term gains.

"This is a huge step for the college and the programs (involved)," he said. "It really moves us up to state-of-the-art facilities."

Parr said it's a fantastic opportunity to get all the programs together in one place.

"As a result, the students will have

a much better learning experience."

New journalism co-ordinator Paul Godkin echoed Parr's sentiments.

"I'm excited that we have (the equipment); I'm viewing the glass as half full," he said. "If I had the choice between waiting a couple weeks and not having the lab, I'll wait two weeks. We have great students and this is going to be great for the school."

Derro said every department is facing challenges.

"No one area is hampered or missing more than any other," he said.

Annelise Thompson, a third-year journalism print and broadcast student, was not as enthusiastic.

"All of the broadcast students I've talked to were extremely disappoint-

ed when we saw the condition of our studio. We expected things to be done by the time we got back, considering we're paying lab fees," she said. "And if we miss three scheduled TV labs, that's a fifth of the semester wasted that we will never get back. And considering how competitive the field is, that's a scary thought."

Derro said the construction should have no bearing on the final outcome of the semester. But he was quick to compliment the students.

"We wouldn't be getting these things if our students weren't working extremely hard," he said. "These things are a direct reflection of the quality of students we have here at the college."



(Photo by Christopher Mills)

As of Sept. 17 the broadcasting/journalism television studio was still not completed.

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# Facebook takes over students' spare time

By JACKIE ALLWOOD

Facebook is a new trend that is monopolizing many people's spare time.

The social network that took the Internet by storm has more than 24 million current users around the world, according to the developers.

Mark Zuckerberg, one of the Facebook developers, was shown in a video on the site telling 800 students at the San Francisco Design Center that the number is based on active users in the last 30 days.

"It's real users we count on here," said Zuckerberg. He said roughly

10 per cent of the Canadian population currently uses Facebook, adding they are pushing to make the world a more open place.

"We do this by building things that help people use their real connections to share information more effectively," said Zuckerberg.

With that many people around the world on Facebook and how open the developer wants it to be, how do they ensure people are safe?

Carrie Gilmour, a first-year broadcast journalism student, said one of her friends was in a bar when a strange person approached her and gave her a hug.

When she asked if she knew the person they said no but recognized her from Facebook.

"I just find it (Facebook) an invasion of privacy," said Gilmour.

There is a privacy option users can select when setting up their Facebook account.

Shadoe O'Dell, a first-year accounting student, said he likes how you can limit people that you add or what they see.

Facebook also has an application that you can use to start a group.

Students have started a group for people in their programs to join while Student Services in the col-

lege has one for all students to join.

Conestoga Students Inc. uses theirs to keep in contact with the students and list upcoming events.

Students can also use this group to contact CSI as most of the staff in the office checks it daily.

O'Dell said he is not part of any group but might add the CSI group for convenience.

"If it (the CSI group) is their best way of communicating, it is definitely good to have," he said.

For some, Facebook is a way to kill time and for others it is a means of staying in contact with people who they haven't seen or talked to

in a long time.

O'Dell said he finds Facebook has no value and could drop it at any time and not miss having it, although friends around him laughed and said they doubted it.

"It kills time," said O'Dell, while his friends continued to laugh.

Zuckerberg said everyone has friends, acquaintances and connections, and through the connections you can come to understand your world.

"We (the developers) have always thought Facebook was a tool that everyone in the world could use," he said.

## CAMPUS CHIROPRACTOR

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Student Centre – Lower Level

748-5220 Ext. 3679



(Photo by Marcia Love)

Di Wu and Hai Hua Cao, both first-year ELS students from China, miss their families, but are enjoying their time in Canada.

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## ELS students love Conestoga College

By MARCIA LOVE

Conestoga's reputation as the number 1 college in Ontario has not only drawn in students from across Canada, but also from around the world.

Approximately 325 international students attend the college every year.

Samantha Murray, manager and student adviser at the international office, said students come here to receive their foundation in English because the Conestoga Language Institute has a fantastic reputation.

"If an English language student requires English upgrading or is here to learn English, they'll go through the Conestoga College Language Institute DSL program," she said. "There are also support services in place. Students can take advantage of many of the support services here on campus offered through Student Services' Learning Commons, as well."

Zeyu Wei, a first-year English as a second language student from Shenzhen, China, heard about Conestoga through his cousin who lives in Canada.

"He taught me Conestoga College may be the best college in Ontario."

Wei said he loves Canada because of the friendly people and nice weather.

He said his teachers and classmates have made his experience at Conestoga more enjoyable.

Conestoga was Wei's first college of choice because he didn't know about many other colleges or uni-

versities in Canada.

He said he is happy with the program he is in.

"I have a nice teacher and very friendly classmates," Wei said. "We are a big group of international students."

Murray said students come to Conestoga from over 30 different countries, including China, Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Latin America, Europe and Russia.

Hai Hua Cao, a first-year ESL student from Guangzhou, China, heard about Conestoga through his sister.

He came to Canada because he thought it would be easier to learn English here.

He said he is happy to be in Canada.

"So far so good," Cao said. "But the winter is so cold."

When Cao finishes his program this year, he would like to come back to Conestoga for a mechanical program.

Di Wu, a first-year ESL student from Suzhou, China, came to Conestoga to improve his English skills.

"It's easier to study here," Wu said. "So I chose Conestoga."

He said he likes Canada, but wishes there were more events for international students.

"Sometimes we get very bored because we don't have a lot of activities here."

Murray said there are about two weekend activities offered a month aimed at international students.

The last event was a trip to Canada's Wonderland on Sept. 22.

## Political parties must aid students

An average college student pays somewhere around \$3,000 in tuition for a school year. Add to that \$300 to \$500 worth of textbooks and school supplies plus \$189 to \$365 for a bus pass or parking. Then you need to factor in normal living expenses like housing and food. All these costs for a student who probably isn't working full-time can be financially crippling.

The political parties need to start focusing on reducing post-secondary education fees in order to help students lift that financial burden. What's more, with the number of students attending post-secondary education increasing, quality of learning in the classroom is taking a dive, and our political leaders need to do something about it.

Jen Hassum, chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students — Ontario, said in a Sept. 6 press release by the Canadian Newswire (CNW) Group, "The Ontario Liberal platform fails college and university students."

According to the press release, last year the McGuinty government cancelled the tuition fee freeze and replaced it with tuition fee increases that for many students are as high as 36 per cent over four years. He has also allowed community colleges to charge hundreds of dollars of ancillary fees to students, which some believe to be illegal.

In a Sept. 15 article in The Record McGuinty says he won't roll back tuition but will instead give post-secondary students an upfront tax credit at the start of the school year.

According to a Sept. 5 article in The Record, the NDP party said they would restore tuition fees to 2003 levels, saving the average undergraduate university student about \$460 a year. College and Universities Minister Chris Bentley said the NDP plan was unrealistic and would cost hundreds of millions of dollars in its first year, and even more in subsequent years.

A Sept. 7 CNW Group press release reports that on Aug. 29, the Ontario government revised and released the salaries of Ontario university presidents in the 2007 disclosure report. The report shows that the average annual salary of the top 10 university presidents was over \$370,000 in 2006.

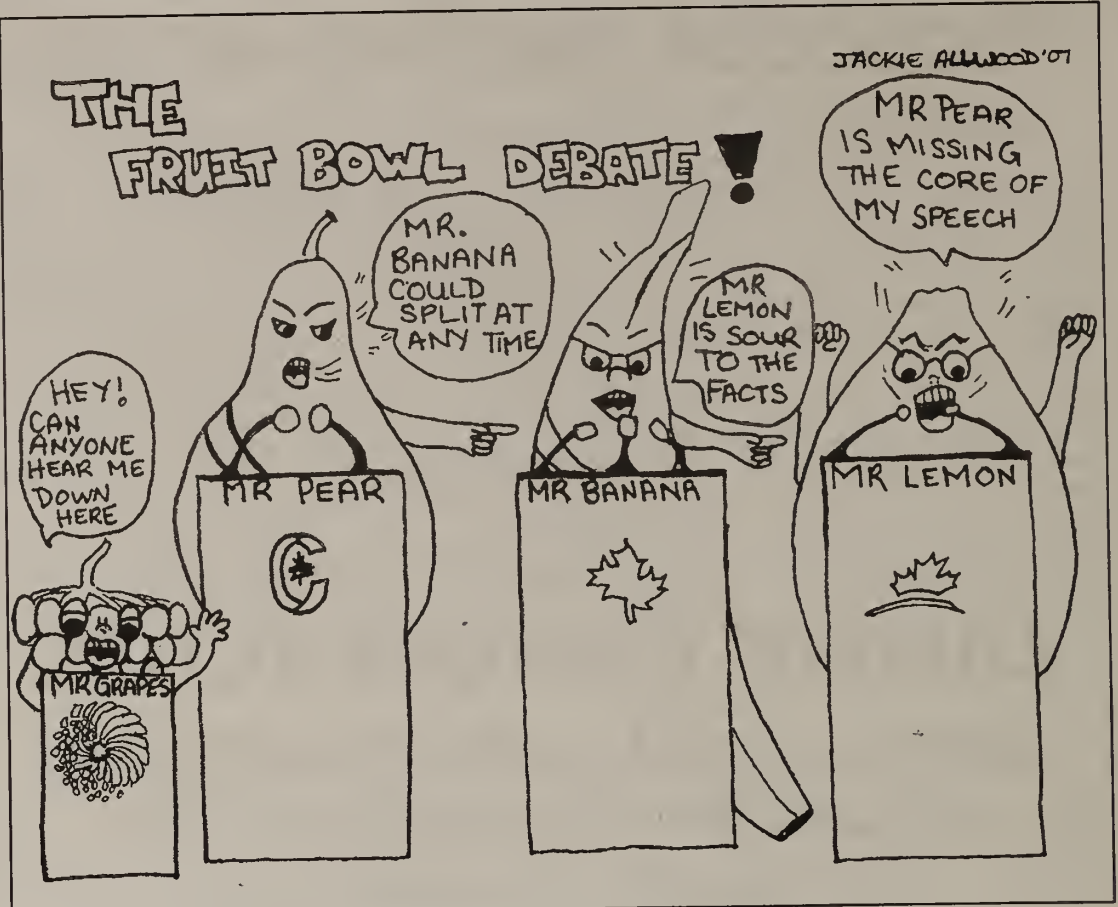
According to the article, Hassum said, "They don't care about skyrocketing tuition fees and massive student debt because they don't share the same financial reality as the vast majority of Ontario families."

This year 3,650 first-year students began classes at Conestoga College. This is 600 more than last year.

By 2009 or 2010, enrolment at Ontario universities is projected to grow by an additional 46,000 students, according to a Sept. 6 CNW Group press release. Over the past 17 years, the student-faculty ratio has gone from 17-1 to 26-1, resulting in Ontario falling further behind the U.S. and other jurisdictions regarding student engagement with their professors and quality of learning.

The political parties really need to look at the breakdown of college and university fees. At Conestoga College, students can opt-out of the Conestoga Students Inc. health plan, saving \$210 in ancillary fees. Do students who never use the recreational facilities need to pay \$117 for a recreation/athletics fee for example? Why can't more of these fees be choices for the students who should be able to decide what they want to use? Parking permits can cost up to \$365 for a school year. That's a ridiculous amount of money.

Two things are for certain, the political parties need to focus on solving the financial hardships of students and students must make their voice heard on Election Day, Oct. 10.



We all have a different flavour, You pick your favourite ...

## Enjoy the moment

Today's world has become so fast people's true priorities have become clouded.

It seems as though everyone has a daily to-do list as long as their arm.

Between checking messages, e-mails, running errands, doing chores and going to work and school there seems to be no time for themselves, family or friends.

We'll get together soon or I'll call you next week are said way too often.

With all the things we pack into our lives we begin putting off the things that make life worth living, spending time with friends, family and yourself.

Memories are not made by sitting chatting to friends and family through Messenger or Facebook.

Memories are made by sharing real experiences with the people you care about.

Call up friends or family and have a barbecue or hit the newest



Jenn Sprach

*Opinion*

club in town.

Spending quiet time by yourself is equally important, everyone needs time to rejuvenate themselves.

Try reading the book you haven't had time to pick up, take the dog for a walk or have a bubble bath.

These things may seem insignificant but in truth these are the things that will lead you to live a long and happy life.

There are so many health problems related to the stress of our everyday lives.

No matter what your career choice it's probably creating health problems for you.

Troublesome digestive tracts are common today because people often eat unhealthy food on the go.

Eating unhealthy also weakens the immune system making you more vulnerable to getting colds or flus that are going around.

As well, we are not taking breaks to get up and move around or chat with fellow co-workers to momentarily reduce the strain on the body and mind.

So take a break, you deserve it, enjoy yourself for once.

Don't live to work, work to live because life isn't worth living if you're not enjoying it.

Life is a precious and delicate thing and can be taken away in a moment.

So make the time on that way too long to-do list to spend quality time with the ones you love.

You never know, the choice may not be there tomorrow.

Life isn't complicated, we make it that way.

### Letters are welcome



**Spoke** welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be signed and include the name and telephone number of the writer. Writers will be contacted for verification.

No unsigned letters will be published. Letters should be no longer than 500 words.

**Spoke** reserves the right to edit any letter for publication.

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## RIM to host career fair

By KAYLA GRANT

Over 280 employers will woo prospective employees at the annual Career Fair.

The event, which will be held at RIM Park on Sept. 26, will run from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This is the largest fair of its kind with an estimated 5,000 alumni and current students attending. The event is held in partnership with Conestoga College, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Guelph and the University of Waterloo.

The career fair is an opportunity to see what's out there says Tao Cruikshank, student/grad employment adviser.

"A lot of students don't care," said Cruikshank. "But this is the time to start thinking about a job."

Entrance is free to all students and alumni who have a valid school/alumni ID card.

"Bring a few resumes," said Cruikshank. "It generates discussion." She also suggests that students pick up the guidebook, which was available on Sept. 18. Career service employees will be at Door 3 today handing out the guidebooks or students can pick up a copy at the Student Client Service Building.

Because of the number of employers present, Cruikshank suggests that students make a list of booths they want to visit, as they will not have time to visit them all.

"Go through the guidebook," said Cruikshank. "See who is coming, choose a top 10 or 15."

She also suggests students do research on the companies they are interested in so they know what they do.

"Come up with well thought out questions (specifically ones on the industry)," she added, and "be prepared to talk about yourself."

A bus will pick up students from Conestoga College's Doon campus at Door 3 at 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

"It's an experience," says Cruikshank, "(although) a little overwhelming. And there's tons of free stuff."

For more information and for tips on what to bring and what to ask visit [www.partners4employment.ca](http://www.partners4employment.ca) or visit career services.

## GRT fare increase reasonable

By KERRY REED

Conestoga College students have to pay a little more this year for a four-month bus pass.

The Grand River Transit pass costs \$189 whereas last year the price was \$185 said Linda Smith, a customer service assistant.

"Bus passes increased this year because the population in the Kitchener area is growing, there are more cars on the road, more traffic and the price of everything has gone up," said Smith. "In turn the price for bus passes and bus fares had to increase."

The GRT website states a college bus pass gives the user unlimited travel on all GRT routes for the four-month period.

"Any college student with a GRT student pass," said Smith, "can use the bus as many times as they want any day of the week whereas if they were to pay as you go it

would be \$2.50 per admission and it only gives the rider a 90-minute transfer before they have to pay again."

Suad Yassin, a first-year general arts and health option student at Conestoga College, said the college bus pass is fairly reasonable in price, adding it is a whole lot cheaper than driving and is more economically friendly.

High school students don't get it any cheaper. They pay an initial \$5 for photo ID and \$48 a month for a bus pass, said Smith, which works out to be about the same as college students pay for two four-month terms.

"I think the price for the bus pass is fair but what I really don't like is the bus picks up high school students," said Ashley Corbett, a second-year early childhood education student at the college. "There are way too many high school kids on the bus, sometimes I can't get on

when I have to."

"College students should have to pay less for a bus pass than high school students," said Ryan Randall, a first-year electrical engineering student at Conestoga. "We have to pay a lot to go to school; we should not have to pay a lot just to get here."

According to the GRT website, bus passes for the University of Waterloo are \$50.58 and are included in the students' tuition. They offer unlimited use during the entire school year.

The website also states Wilfrid Laurier University full-time students pay \$41.58 for a pass in their tuition.

"I think Conestoga College should include the price of a bus pass in the tuition," said Kyle Defazio, a first-year firefighting student at the college. "Other than that, I think the price for the bus pass is reasonable."



(Photo by Sarah Jaynes)

Conestoga students wait for the 110 express bus to Conestoga at Fairview Park Mall.

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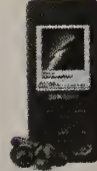
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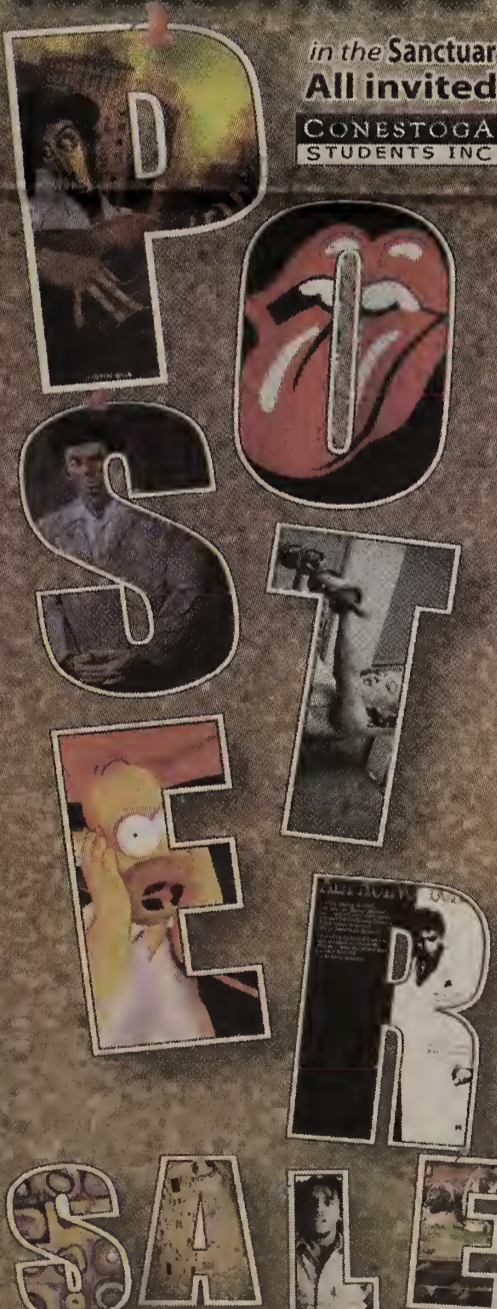


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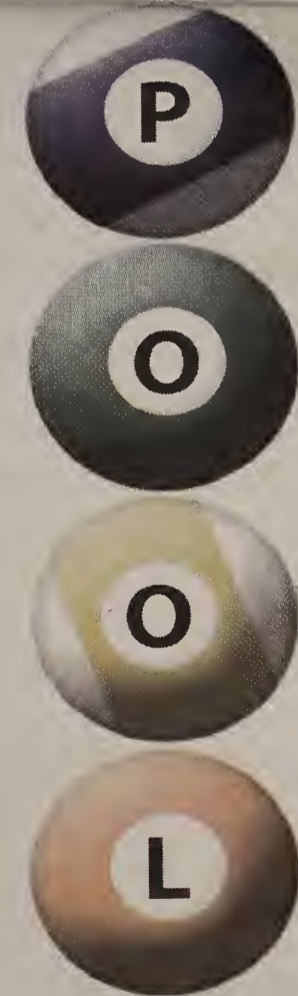
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# Foreign doctors become nurses

By **CHARLOTTE PRONG PARKHILL**

Eight doctors, three dentists, a pharmacist and a midwife walk into a lab.

No, it's not the beginning of a bad joke. It's the fast track practical nursing program, a new offering at Conestoga College this year.

This pilot program is the first of its kind in Ontario. It was designed to give foreign-educated health-care professionals an opportunity to get a practical nursing diploma in one year, instead of the two years normally required.

The students are immigrants who had a medical career in their home country — a dentist from Mexico, a family physician from Cuba and a dermatologist from Nicaragua are all part of the group.

According to the website for the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, foreign-trained doctors must pass a series of exams and do a residency before they can qualify as doctors here, and there are a limited number of spots available.

"For a variety of reasons, it's not always easy for foreign-educated

health-care professionals to get back into their field," said Lois Gaspar, chair of the nursing program.

Program applicants had to submit their educational transcripts and documents. "We could compress our existing practical nursing program because the candidates had pre-existing knowledge relating to health care," said Gaspar.

Proficiency in English was another requirement, because of the need to communicate with patients. The fast track students will begin their clinical placements in nursing homes in October.

Pauline Shore, co-ordinator of the English language studies program, worked with the students for eight weeks over the summer, focusing on medical terms. She said the students are highly motivated and have an amazing spirit. "They've created a great network within the classroom," she said. "They bonded really well."

Shore said foreign-trained professionals have been coming to Canada for years, and the government does little to help them get into the health-care system. "But the need is here," she said. "What could be better than



(Photos by Charlotte Prong Parkhill)

Thirteen students from around the world are taking part in a pilot program that trains foreign-educated health-care professionals to be practical nurses.

a nurse coming to your bedside who's also a doctor?"

Camaraderie and a sense of

humour are clearly evident while the students work in a classroom with nursing instructor Margaret

Holden. And when they go for break, like many Canadians, they head straight for Tim Hortons.

## Practical nurses, personal stories



**Farah Mohammadion and Ali Ahrari**

Ahrari, an emergency room doctor, and Mohammadion, a dentist, are a husband and wife team who immigrated to Canada from Iran just over a year ago.

"It is very difficult for us because we haven't any family here, and there is a different culture here," says Ahrari. In Iran they were very close with their extended family, but now it's just them and their two daughters.

Mohammadion also cites language as a barrier. "We can't communicate, we can't express ourselves," she says. "And also, we can't get a good job like we had in our country." She says after their first year here, Ahrari wanted to go back home. "Now, all are satisfied."

"Canada may be the best country in the world for education and a good life," adds Ahrari. "We decided to come to Canada for my children because I think there are good opportunities." Like proud parents everywhere, they brag about their oldest daughter's academic achievement — a 97 per cent average in her high school courses. They are hoping she will be eligible for a scholarship.

Mohammadion, Ahrari and their daughter will all be graduating

around the same time, and the family will make a decision about where to live based partly on where she decides to go to university. "In our culture, children live with their parents until they marry," says Ahrari.

After they graduate from the practical nursing program, Ahrari hopes to work in an emergency department again. Mohammadion may continue her education in hopes of becoming a dentist here. "It's not impossible, but it depends on me, how determined I can be," she says. Between the two of them, they have over 30 years of experience, and they'd like to be able to help people.

Though the adjustment has been difficult, they feel they made the right decision for their family. "This country is a very good country," says Ahrari. "There are a lot of cultures and they live together very friendly and lovely."

They say their daughter believes that the government here really cares about people and their problems, and gives them freedom.

"We had a house, we had money, we had everything," adds Mohammadion. "Here, we don't have anything. But, we get something else that's more valuable for me."

### William Alvarez

Alvarez wants people to know there's more to his native Colombia than guerilla warfare and cocaine.

"It's a very good country," says the surgeon. "We have very good weather, very good food, but we have many social problems." Social problems that lead to poverty, crime and political corruption are the main reasons Alvarez decided to move here with his wife and five children five years ago.

While his wife is going to the University of Waterloo to obtain an optometrist licence, he has worked as a personal support worker in a nursing home. He also writes for Spanish language newspapers and magazines, focusing on naturopathy. "I believe in holistic medicine," he says. "That's the best medicine — listen to the patient."

Alvarez says the only discrimination he has faced in Canada is professional discrimination. "I know a Cuban doctor (here) who is working cleaning offices, yet some Canadians are going to Cuba to get (medical procedures)," he says. "Why? People are the same. Bodies are the same. It doesn't matter what language you speak."

### Biljana Maric

"If you are coming as a doctor to Canada, you have to be ready to be really frustrated," says Maric. She had 10 years of experience as a physician before coming to Canada with her husband and two daughters when civil war broke out in the former Yugoslavia.

Maric has been working as a personal support worker in a nursing home, and is glad that in this fast track program, students are being given some credit for the medical knowledge they already have. "This should have been done long ago." She says many foreign-trained doctors are working outside the health-care system. "In Toronto, you see doctors driving cabs." Maric points out that 40,000 people in Waterloo Region don't have a family doctor, and waiting times in emergency rooms are unbearable. "At least we can do something. We can help a little bit," she says.

Maric left behind a career that she was passionate about and worked hard to attain, but she still thinks it was worth it. "Oh definitely. That's the price I paid for my safety and the safety of my kids," she says. "It's a high price."



### Yin Ban

"I thought I would be a doctor forever," Ban says, "but things changed."

Ban trained for nearly 10 years to become an obstetrician in China. Then her husband, who works in computer technology, decided he wanted to come to Canada. It's a fairly easy process to emigrate from China to Canada. "They don't care about us. It's a big population," says Ban. It was a little more difficult for her. "Because they have a shortage of doctors in our hospitals, they didn't want me to leave."

Ban is taking the fast track program as a first step to becoming a nurse practitioner, "if I have time and energy for further study," laughs this mother of two. "I like Canadian's health care system because it is very supportive," she says. "China has a big population. They have no chance to take care of every person."

In the four years that Ban has been here, she's been able to visit family in China twice. She and her family belong to a Chinese cultural society that meets every two months to share food and information. She cooks traditional Chinese food at home, but her son prefers Canadian food. "And I like cheese!" she says. "No one eats cheese in China."

### Ashraf Hazraty

"It was war. The Taliban was there," says Hazraty. "We decided to come to this country for the education of my children and the safety of my life."

He was an orthopedic surgeon in Afghanistan for 25 years before coming to Canada with his wife and six children two years ago.

Hazraty has passed two of the required medical exams, but it will take five more years to get a licence to practice here. In the meantime, he's happy to be in the practical nursing program. "It is a good opportunity for me to be in my field and to work in a hospital with patients."

Hazraty says he is happy with the Canadian military presence in Afghanistan, though he hopes they will be able to come home soon. "They are great people and we appreciate they are helping," he says. "Hopefully one day peace will come to our country and I will go back to work as a doctor."



# Faire volunteer rules

By HOLLY FEATHERSTONE

While meandering through a medley of lords, maidens, squires, a madcap herald and a host of eclectic dance troupes, a particularly distinctive lady of fairness and finery roams the Kingdom of Mearth, greeting attendants and distributing favours to awestruck admirers.

Tracey Biggar, formally known as "Queen Charlotte of Mearth," donning a scarlet cloak, skirt and embellished bodice and speaking with an assumed English accent, presided with "King Bertram" over the royal court actors at Waterloo Park's 10th annual Royal Medieval Faire Sept. 15, which lured 5,000 patrons.

Biggar, who oversees promotional efforts for the faire's four-member board of directors and has been actively involved since the faire's inception in 1997, said earning the exalted role of Queen Charlotte in the community of actors known as Bertram, Charlotte and the Pretenders, wasn't her intention.

"I've done quite a bit of acting, (but) didn't want to be queen," said Biggar, who initially helped as an organizer but auditioned for the role on a whim.

The Royal Medieval Faire, an annual non-profit, volunteer-driven event, engages its patrons in interactive games and activities reminiscent of the medieval era. Part of

the merrymaking included dressing the part, communicating with the actors while in character and embracing the "chivalrous" customs of the time. Biggar's role as queen included opening the ceremonies and knight's tournament. This year, however, she also aided in scripting the 25 royal court actors.

Biggar said her involvement with the fair did not stem from a particular interest in anachronism, though she often studies the cultural and social aspects of the period to supplement her understanding of her fictional role.

"Most people involved certainly have an interest in history, but no specialized (study) in (any) historical period."

Biggar said the unique appeal of the event has garnered a great deal of continuous support from local volunteers and she is no exception.

Karen Lucas, artistic director and co-ordinator of the cast, said the devotion of the volunteers and actors, combined with the city and greater community's espousal, has kept the fair an ongoing success.

"The City of Waterloo has supported the fair from the first meeting we (had) with the recreation and leisure department," she said. "With all of the wonderful and talented volunteers who return year after year to help us, we can make this incredible event exist."

With a myriad of games and mus-



(Photos by Holly Featherstone)

Top: Tracey Biggar on the throne as "Queen Charlotte," Sept. 15. Above right: The knight's tournament prevails before the royal court.

ings for adults and children alike, Biggar said the community regards the fair with great fondness.

"(The fair) has such a magical effect on people. (They've) grown up attending the fair (and) feel it's like coming home," she said, recalling last year's bestowal of "queen's favours," bracelets given to select "maidens" who demonstrated personable manners and chivalry.

Lucas said the prospect of increased community interest is plausible with both visitors and actors alike in anticipation of the continuous whims, woes and wonders amid the vast realm of Mearth.

"I think the 'pretenders' in all of us enjoy being whisked away to the kingdom for a day."



## COUNSELLOR'S CORNER: Mature Students

Post-secondary education is a journey of exploration; one that stretches comfort zones and embraces diverse ways of thinking and doing. Returning to school after years of being out in the workplace or raising a family can be intimidating, exhilarating, challenging, and sometimes unsettling, and despite a wealth of life experience from work, home, or prior training, adults feel unsure of what is expected of them in the college environment.

Many mature students are apprehensive about returning to school and are concerned about how they will perform academically. Their challenges are different than those of younger students, including but not limited to: balancing parenthood and home life with school, and re-learning and re-developing study and research skills. It can take time to adjust and an important part of that adjustment includes developing competence in learning and study skills, a willingness to utilize resources, and an openness to learn from peers.

Here are a few observations about mature students that might ease some of the uncertainties about returning to learning:

- ⇒ **KNOW THAT MOST ADULTS FEEL APPREHENSIVE ABOUT RETURNING TO LEARNING.** The truth is, that most adults do very well if not better than they did before, and they actually enjoy it.
- ⇒ **THINK ABOUT WHY YOU ARE RETURNING.** Don't be surprised if you find reasons other than the ones you had anticipated to continue your learning.
- ⇒ **DO WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOU.** There is no right way to do this. Think about what is important to you and how it will best fit your life circumstances and goals.
- ⇒ **MAKE YOUR WELL BEING A PRIORITY.** Don't compromise on the things that keep you physically, emotionally, and spiritually well. Make sure you build them into your schedule.
- ⇒ **DISCUSS YOUR PLANS.** Think about how others in your life might support you.

Mature students are also sometimes concerned about fitting in socially. The Counselling Services Office can help. For more information, contact Counselling Services.

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# Cycling is a great way to go green

*Sales tax exemption on bikes and helmets helps consumers reap the benefits*

By VANESSA BUTLER

Cycling has many benefits. It is good for your health, promotes healthy lifestyles and reduces the number of cars we have on our roads thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The Ontario government is proposing a sales tax exemption on bikes and helmets for those consumers interested in reaping the many benefits of cycling.

"This tax idea is great," said Usman Valiante, director of advocacy for the Bicycling Trade Association of Canada (BTAC).

"It is really going to encourage people to buy."

Valiante said it is important to have the infrastructure in place in order to make people more comfortable riding a bike. This infrastructure includes dedicated bicycle lanes and secure parking as well as the ability to take bikes on and off of public transit.

"I would definitely encourage cycling," said Valiante.

"People also need to feel safe when they are out there. People need to have the confidence to ride their bikes and not have to worry about vehicles and other

motorists on the roads."

The BTAC has identified two key factors to increase the popularity of cycling as a mode of transportation — recreation and leisure.

Reducing taxes on bicycles, bicycle helmets, parts and accessories will provide a direct incentive to buy and ride bicycles as well as investments in cycling infrastructure by both governments such as bicycle lanes; secure parking lots and secure cycle storage.

The BTAC hopes the tax relief on bicycles and helmets will give

people a financial incentive to buy and send a strong message that cycling has an important role to play in improving health, the environment and reducing traffic congestion, said Paul Nielsen, president of the Bicycle Trade Association of Canada.

Bicycles have many proven benefits. A bicycle is the most energy efficient vehicle on the road. A bicycle can cover the same distance as a car, but uses zero fuel and omits zero greenhouse gases. Bicycling reduces the risk of serious conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity

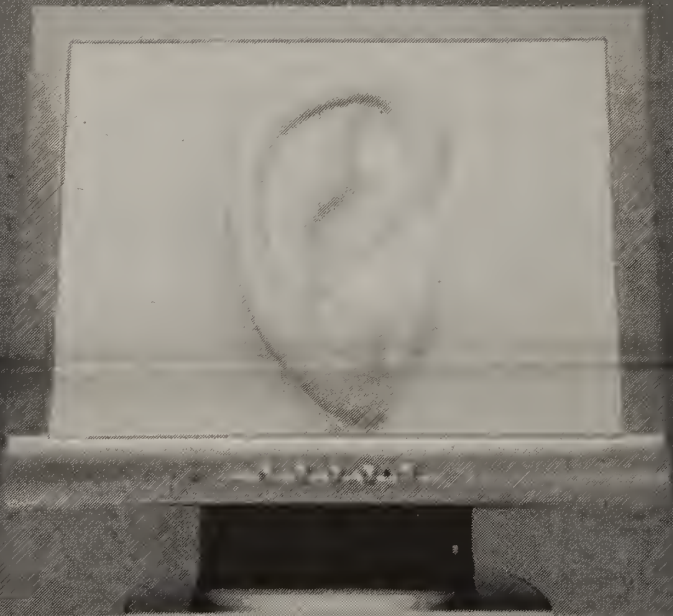
and diabetes.

Bicycling also reduces urban and rural congestion, as well as pollution which contributes to smog.

The BTAC is the national voice of cycling in Canada. It advocates, promotes and seeks to motivate, unit and inspire Canadians to make bicycling a primary form of transportation and recreation.

For more information on the proposed tax relief or general information on cycling, go to [www.btac.org](http://www.btac.org) or call toll-free 1-866-528-2822.

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## Varsity teams underway

By ALEX MCNANNEY

Beginner's luck is a well-known phrase in professional sports. But for the Conestoga College men's outdoor soccer team, there was none present on Sept. 15. The Condors lost 3-1 against perennial league powerhouse, the Sheridan Bruins.

Head coach Geoff Johnstone said after the game, the Condors' inexperience was on display.

Sheridan had the benefit of having most of their team compiled of returning players, while the Condors had seven rookies in their starting lineup.

Johnstone said he was pleased with the team's play overall.

"It's a work in progress," he said.

The Condors took a 1-0 lead into the half on the strength of a goal by Mohammad Yousufi. But a series of mental mistakes lead to three unanswered goals by the Bruins.

Johnstone said he was impressed with rookie Andrew Sirio's play as well as central defenders Marko Miskovic and Michael Werchola.

The team heads to Humber to take

on the rival Hawks on Sept. 26.

Elsewhere in Conestoga varsity sports, the men's rugby team suffered a tough 24-12 loss against Fleming-Peterborough. Head coach Joel Hussey said before the game he likes his team's chances.

"We have a good balanced team with no holes," he said. "The players have responded well to our coaching strategies and if we continue on the same path I like our chances."

The Condors host rival Humber on Sept. 26.

In women's fastball, the Condors were off to a great start, holding a spotless 3-0 record as of Sept. 17. The Condors defeated Mohawk 5-4 on Sept. 11 and then pounded Seneca 4-1 and 11-6 in back-to-back games.

The team plays next in Hamilton against Mohawk on Sept. 25.

The women's outdoor soccer team battled to a 2-2 draw against Sheridan on Sept. 15. Renee Blanchard and Jasmine Campos scored for the Condors. The team next travels to Humber to take on the Hawks on Sept. 26.

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# Slasher film gets sleepy review

## Soundclash rocks at the Element

By SARAH JAYNES

Screams were expected to be heard from movie theatres after the Aug. 31 release of Halloween.

However, they've been silent as this long-awaited release leaves most movie-goers yawning in their seats.

The ninth and hopefully final remake of Halloween was expected to be somewhat of a mock classic horror film with director Rob Zombie behind the camera. After his better known horror movie releases such as, House of a 1,000 Corpses and The Devil's Rejects, it almost seemed like this remake of Halloween would be one of the better of the nine that have been released over nearly three decades.

As the movie begins the plot takes you back to Michael Myers as a young deranged and slightly disturbed child. It takes the viewer back to nearly 30 years ago when John Carpenter originally released the biggest horror film of our time. Zombie shows us the man behind the mask, his family and what triggered Michael Myers to become the serial killer we all know and love. The first 45 minutes of the film are fairly informative and even include a few moments when you might flinch in your seat, but it is nothing that we haven't seen before



and it becomes very predictable after the first few scenes. As the movie progresses to Myers in the insane asylum, it becomes unclear as to whether this movie is a horror or a drama.

Besides the boring plot and horrible acting, the "scary parts" are overdone blood and gore that are more shocking than horrifying.

However, if you are a sucker for a good ending, you'll love this movie because it comes again and again and again and again. This 110-minute movie seemed like an eternity as it dragged on and on with cliché after cliché.

The only good thing that came out of Halloween 9 is it does tie up loose ends from the past eight versions. So if you're a hardcore fan from the '70s, you can finally put your mind at ease, your questions will be answered.

For now it is pretty safe to say that after this 2007 release Michael Myers should be put to rest.

By AARON O'CONNELL

There was no doubt that the fans felt the songs of Bedouin Soundclash at the Elements in Kitchener on Sept. 11.

After closing the show with their hit song, When the Night Feels My Song, the talented trio couldn't resist the loud screaming of over 850 fans as they made their way back to the stage to perform two more encore songs.

"The whole live performance was phenomenal, the music, the effects, it was just an overall great show," Soundclash fan Tim Lalonde said after the show.

The atmosphere was full of energy and there wasn't one song where the fans weren't singing along.

With fans yelling compliments after each song the energized band constantly danced around to a mix of older songs as well as songs off their newest album, Street Gospels.

Zaki Ibrahim and her band opened for Soundclash and Zaki's powerful voice did not disappoint.

Her catchy soulful reggae music with a twist of hip-hop had the fans on their feet and dancing to the beats.

It seemed Zaki was the perfect fit to get the fans ready for Bedouin Soundclash and she was very appreciative of the audience.

"Wow, I can't believe this reaction," Zaki said following one of the songs. "You guys are great, thank you."



(Photo by Aaron O'Connell)

Bassist Eon Sinclair and drummer Pat Pengelly play for 850 fans in downtown Kitchener, Sept. 11.

The young Toronto-based vocalist along with her backup singer, returned to the stage about halfway through the Soundclash set to sing back up vocals.

The show, presented by Conestoga Students Inc. (CSI), was moved to the Elements from the campus because CSI needed a bigger venue.

"We know Bedouin Soundclash is a popular band that just put out an album," CSI events programmer Lindsay Silva said. "So we held the show at the Elements to sell more tickets."

The three-piece band, consisting

of lead singer/guitarist Jay Malinowski, bassist Eon Sinclair and drummer Pat Pengelly, have toured with the legendary Vernon Buckley from the '70s reggae duo, the Maytones, and have played with Ben Harper as well as Damien Marley, the son of reggae legend Bob Marley.

They formed while attending Queen's University in Kingston and have already released three albums since they got together back in 2001.

The trio is now off to the U.S. for a couple of shows before they take their tour to the UK.

WATERLOO REGIONAL POLICE SERVICE

## Explore the possibilities...

A career in policing seems a long way from my Honours Bachelor of Science in molecular biology and genetics. But I wanted a career that would challenge me mentally and physically – more than that, I wanted to impact my community. My degree provided a solid foundation for my career in policing. Becoming a police officer is the best decision I ever made!"

— Constable Alison Curran

The Waterloo Regional Police Service opens the door to a fulfilling and challenging career.



[www.wrps.on.ca](http://www.wrps.on.ca)

people helping people

